

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as shown below, wherein ~~strikethrough~~ indicates material to be deleted and underlining indicates material to be added. The listing of claims below will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

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Listing of claims:

1-27. (Cancelled)

28. (Currently amended) A method for producing plants or parts thereof having increased tolerance against drought, fungal infections, increased salt concentrations or extreme temperature, and showing essentially normal growth, comprising:

- (a) transforming a plant, a plant tissue, or a plant cell with a nucleic acid which encodes a virus-encoded transport protein;
- (b) regenerating at least one transgenic plant from the transformed plant, plant tissue, or plant cell;
- (c) testing each transgenic plant from step (b) to identify transgenic plants having increased tolerance against drought, fungal infections, increased salt concentrations or extreme temperature in comparison with wild-type plants or transgenic plants not transformed with the nucleic acid which encodes a virus-encoded transport protein, and showing essentially normal growth; and
- (d) using each transgenic plant identified in step (c) to produce at least one transgenic plant line, plant, plant part, or plant cell having increased tolerance against drought, fungal infections, increased salt concentrations or extreme temperature and showing essentially normal growth,

wherein the virus-encoded transport protein is not tobacco mosaic virus (TMV) movement protein or a derivative thereof.